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6. — *La Fontaine. A Present for the Young.* From the French. Boston : Weeks, Jordan, & Co. 1839. 18mo. pp. 108.

It is stated in the modest preface to this little volume, that the fables which compose it, “have been selected from a manuscript translation of the entire work of M. de la Fontaine,” which will be published, if sufficient encouragement is afforded by the reception of this specimen. The translator truly remarks, that the original work “has been more multiplied than any other in French.” It is the favorite reading of the young and old, and of people of all nations. Its lessons of wisdom and experience, expressed in the most terse and idiomatic language, have made it a sort of universal classic. But it is a very difficult work to translate, so as to preserve all the spirit and felicity of the original. The French language, for this kind of composition, is far superior to any other in Europe, on account of its numerous brilliant and pithy idioms, and the elegance and spirit of its conversational style. But we think the author of this little volume has succeeded surprisingly well. Though his translations are not always literal, they are conceived and executed in the spirit of the original, and are, on the whole, a very fair, and even faithful, representative of it. It cannot be doubted, that the whole work will be speedily called for, and that it will be a very popular book, if it is all done with the best exercise of the taste and skill shown in the specimens we have examined. But, as one ought to aim at as great a degree of excellence as possible, and he who has done so well can, with the pains demanded by so high and difficult a task, do very much better, we would recommend it to the translator to subject the work to a very deliberate and thorough revision before it is finally committed to the press ; with the special purpose of making the translation correspond *exactly* with the original, in measure, as well as in other things, if it may be.

We give one of the fables in the original, together with the translation.

“LE CORBEAU ET LE RENARD.

“Maitre corbeau, sur un arbre perché,
Tenait en son bec un fromage.
Maitre renard, par l'odeur alléché,
Lui tint à peu près ce langage :
Hé ! bonjour, monsieur du corbeau.
Que vous êtes joli ! que vous me semblez beau !
Sans mentir, si votre ramage
Se rapporte à votre plumage,

Vous êtes le phénix des hôtes de ces bois.
 A ces mots le corbeau ne se sent pas de joie ;
 Et, pour montrer sa belle voix,
 Il ouvre un large bec, et laisse tomber sa proie.
 Le renard s'en saisit, et dit : Mon bon monsieur
 Apprenez que tout flatteur
 Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute :
 Cette leçon vaut bien un fromage, sans doute.
 Le corbeau, honteux et confus,
 Jura, mais un peu tard, qu'on ne l'y prendrait plus."

"THE RAVEN AND THE FOX.

" Perched on a lofty oak,
 Sir Raven held a lunch of cheese ;
 Sir Fox, who smelt it in the breeze,
 Thus to the holder spoke : —
 ' Ha ! how do you do, Sir Raven ?
 Well, your coat, Sir, is a brave one !
 So black and glossy, on my word, Sir,
 With voice to match, you were a bird, Sir,
 Well fit to be the Phoenix of these days.'
 Sir Raven, loth to lose such praise,
 Must show how musical his croak, —
 Down fell the luncheon from the oak, —
 Which grabbing up, Sir Fox thus spoke, —
 ' *The flatterer, my good Sir,
 Aye liveth on his listener ;
 Which lesson, if you please,
 Is doubtless worth the cheese.*'
 A bit too late, Sir Raven swore
 The rogue should never cheat him more." — pp. 6, 7.

We have taken this entirely at random. The reader will perceive, that the translator feels the spirit, and has caught the turn, of the original. Yet it contains some departures from the French, which, it seems to us, he would do well to look to. For example, "le corbeau ne se sent pas de joie," "the raven is beside himself with joy," is translated "Sir Raven, loth to lose such praise." The ingenious translator would find no insuperable difficulty in making alterations in such passages, so as to render his work more spirited than it is now, and considerably more faithful to the *letter* of the original.
